

**Let's Make A Section of Santa Cruz Avenue
An Appealing Pedestrian-Friendly Main Street
(Two Proposals)**



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What will it take to transform downtown Menlo Park into a vibrant and beautiful hub for shopping and social activities? And is it even possible? Most residents would say provide “a more appealing mix of shops and restaurants and make parking more convenient”, but actually accomplishing such a big transformation has remained a huge challenge even now when the regional economy has performed well. I believe that it IS possible and there has never been a better time to try. It will take a modified vision for downtown, well-coordinated bold steps by our city government, businesses and residents, and strong city leadership and community support. In this document I propose converting a three-block section of Santa Cruz Avenue into a special pedestrian-friendly main street *that rebalances the mix of pedestrian and vehicle usages*. This would NOT be a pedestrian-only mall as most in the U.S. have failed for good reasons.

Current Situation

Downtown Menlo Park is neither a prosperous nor struggling business district. Businesses generally do well and the amount of vacancies and business turnover is not unusual. There have been few property sales, major structure renovations, and new construction because family property owners have generally placed properties in private trusts rather than sell them. Therefore, there have been no dramatic changes in the mix of businesses in Menlo Park unlike what has occurred in neighboring Palo Alto and Redwood downtowns. There the trend has been to add more restaurants, cafes, pubs and specialized niche businesses. The Stanford Shopping Center dominates the local market for high-end products - especially household and fashion items - and for the more general products sold in department stores. Menlo Park and Atherton residents mostly shop and dine in places other than downtown Menlo Park and say it offers too few appealing options.

Making Downtown Menlo Park Special

Menlo Park should create a downtown that serves Menlo Park and Atherton residents, guests and workers rather than attempt to directly compete with the nearby Stanford Shopping Center and downtown Palo Alto. These consumer alternatives have unique attributes that make them regional destination spots for thousands of daily visitors. Instead, Menlo Park should leverage its own set of strengths and advantages. It’s traffic and parking problems are much less severe. It’s older downtown structures and extensive parking plazas offer tremendous opportunities for re-vitalization. And within the next 4-5 years, multi-use developments planned for 500 and 1300 El Camino Real

will together attract about 700 new residents and 1500 new workers with easy access to the Santa Cruz shopping district. These changes could have a huge positive impact on downtown Menlo Park.



Streetscape - Downtown (Menlo Park, California); Santa Cruz Avenue consists of small, distinct storefronts, in one- and two-story buildings, that line and define the street

Argument For A Pedestrian Promenade

A pedestrian-friendly street would be the catalyst that triggers a positive dynamic process:

1. Menlo Park and Atherton residents will be attracted to downtown by new amenities, activities and regular entertainment, and a more attractive setting for existing cafes and restaurants, and Menlo Park can leverage its commitment to a pedestrian-friendly street to attract a few anchor businesses that generate significant foot-traffic. A microbrewery, pub-style restaurant, and “Café Barrone-like” café would be ideal.
2. An increase in downtown usage will boost the profitability of downtown businesses and attract new ones.
3. An increasingly appealing mix of businesses and greater downtown vitality will in turn generate even greater usage by “residents” and workers.
4. As word spreads of a “new Menlo Park” consumers who either live in the area or visit Palo Alto, Redwood City and the Stanford Shopping Center will ALSO visit Menlo Park’s downtown. Then Menlo Park will become an attractive *secondary destination*.



Not A Pedestrian Mall

More than 200 American cities have built pedestrian malls in order to compete with suburban malls, and 89% have failed. I encourage reading of *The American Experience With Pedestrian Malls* downloadable from <http://bit.ly/pedestrian-malls>

Primary causes of pedestrian mall failures.

- Prohibited cars
- Tried to replicate the suburban shopping center experience
- Provided inadequate parking

A small number of small cities (less than 100,000 residents) have built successful pedestrian malls. Church Street Marketplace (Burlington Vermont), Pearl Street Mall (Boulder Colorado), Main Street Downtown Mall (Charlottesville Virginia) are good examples.

Pedestrian mall success factors:

- Small number of blocks (four or less)
- Variety of activities and active uses
- Many nearby residents and workers
- Attractive design for walkers, shoppers, reading, people-watching
- Beautiful aesthetics
- Strong anchor businesses
- Convenient parking
- Central management
- Heavy schedule of regular events, activities, entertainment
- Local college nearby
- Near a popular tourist destination
- Convenient public transit

A Pedestrian-Friendly Main Street Success Factors

Would be the same as successful pedestrian mall but allow vehicles and some on-street parking.

Would take advantage of Menlo Parks...

- Proximity to affluent Menlo Park and Atherton nearby neighborhoods.
- Proximity to Menlo College, Stanford University and several nearby high schools.
- Proximity to downtown Palo Alto, Redwood City and the Stanford Shopping center.
- New nearby residents, workers and guests generated by the Greenheart and Stanford developments.



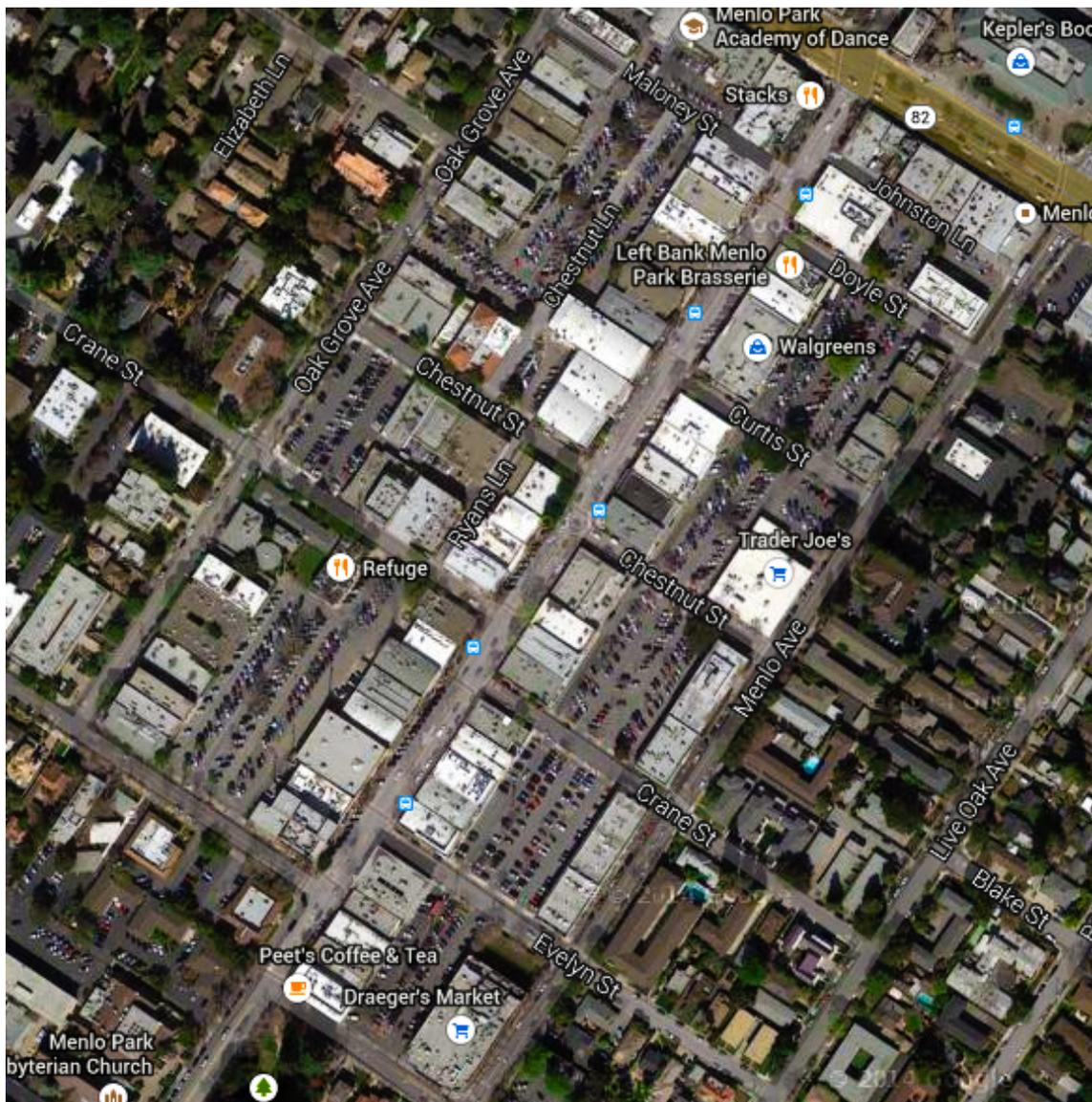
Anchor Business Model

Café Barrone in Menlo Park is an excellent example of the kind of anchor business and setting that would contribute to the success of a pedestrian street.

- Food, menu and service are excellent and prices are reasonable.
- There is ample outdoor seating set a great distance from traffic.
- The site enjoys sun mid-day thru late afternoon and it's rarely windy; there are umbrellas if one prefers shade.

- There is a fountain, an architectural arch, and the building that formerly housed the British Bankers Club.
- It is located next to Kepler's another Menlo Park favorite.
- There is lots of parking nearby (on-site).
- Never rushed customers can stay as long as they wish.
- This is a good place to read, work, talk or simply "people watch".

Pedestrian-Friendly Santa Cruz Avenue – Two Alternatives



I propose two alternatives that differ primarily in terms of the number of vehicle lanes that pass thru the pedestrian-friendly street. A small amount of 15 minute parking could be provided.

Alternative 1 – One Way Vehicle Traffic

Build a three-block pedestrian-friendly main street on Santa Cruz Avenue that runs between Doyle Street and Crane Street. This would entail:

- *Eliminating the traffic lane and parking on the south side of Santa Cruz Avenue*
- Allow one-way traffic on the north side routed from the direction of El Camino Real. This traffic could turn right at Curtis, Chestnut and Crane or continue on Santa Cruz towards University Avenue.
- Cross-traffic would be allowed only at Crane Street intersection and between Doyle and Murphy Streets.
- The sidewalks on the traffic side of the pedestrian-friendly street would be widened where there is no street parking, and this parking would be limited to 30 minutes or less.
- The three short sections of sides streets running from Santa Cruz Avenue to the parking plazas on Curtis and Chestnut would be pedestrian-only extensions.

Menlo Park should undertake a multi-stage implementation of the pedestrian-friendly street starting with a full-scale design; establish evaluation criteria, solicit resident and business feedback on a regular basis; and implement high value changes and improvements. As individual blocks are added, help businesses on Santa Cruz create inviting back entrances from parking plazas.

Possible Road Map

Step 1: Expand “sidewalk” dining areas like what is being done at the Left Bank

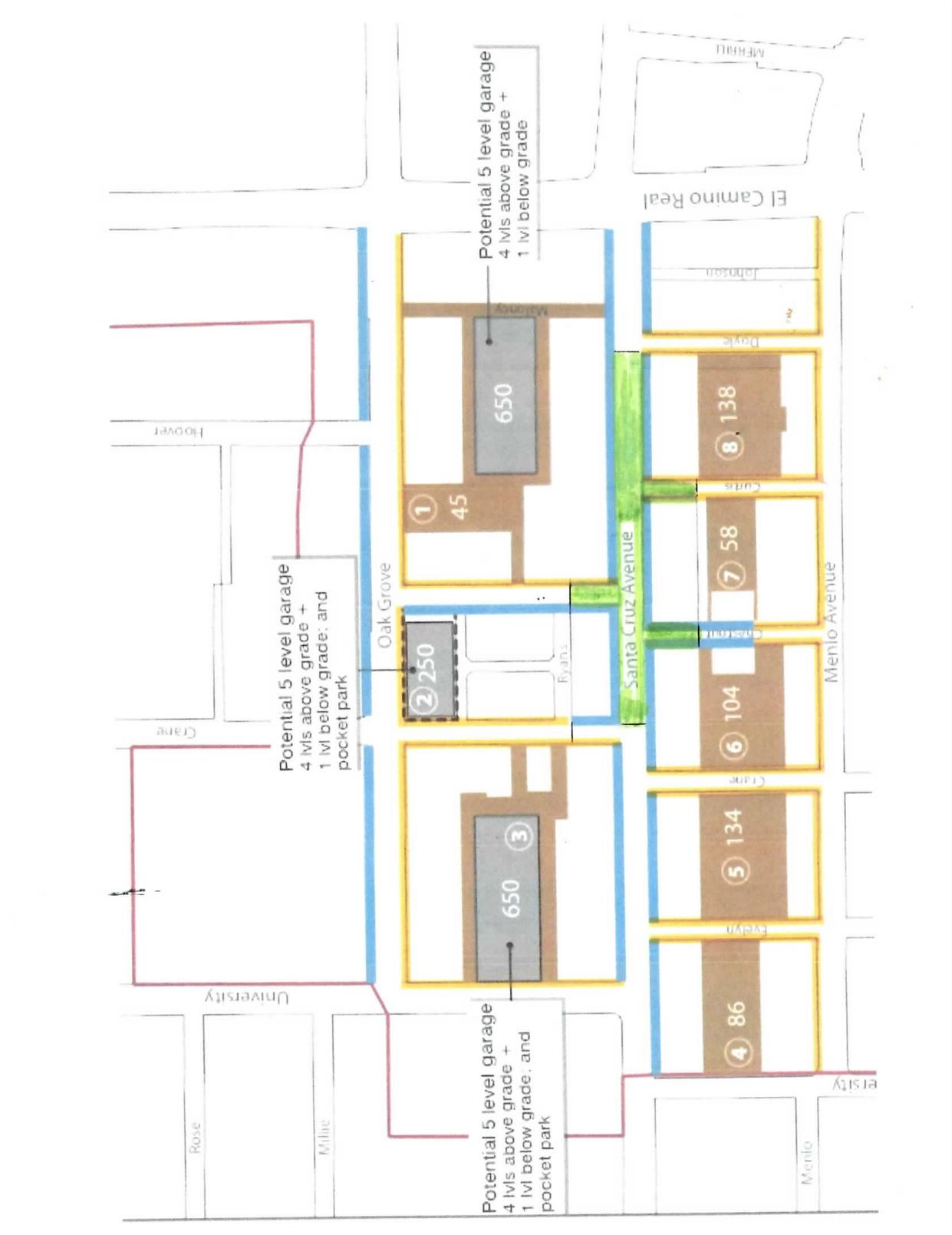
Step 2: Close off one side of one block between Doyle Street and Curtis, create walking and dining space, and add public benches and additional amenities. Provide suitable live music and other entertainment on a regular and predictable basis. Persuade a pub or micro-brewery and a “Barrone 2” to open somewhere on or near Santa Cruz between Doyle and Crane.

Step 3: Add the block between Curtis Street to Chestnut Street.

Step 4: Add the block from Chestnut to Crane.

Is there a temporary surface that could be laid down?

Pedestrian-Friendly Street Area of Santa Cruz Avenue



Pedestrian-Friendly Street Road Map

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Duration (24-33 Months)	6 Months	6 - 9 Months	6-9 Months	6-9 months	n/a
Areas					
Restaurant Street Dining	Temporary	Permanent			
Doyle - Curtis Block		Temporary	Permanent		
Curtis - Chestnut Block			Temporary	Permanent	
Chestnut - Crane Block				Temporary	Permanent
Santa Cruz Traffic (Assumes one-way on north side)					
Restaurant Street Dining	No Change				
Doyle - Curtis Block	No Change	One-way Right Turn at Curtis	One-way		
Curtis - Chestnut Block	No Change		One-way Right Turn at Chestnut	One-way	
Chestnut - Crane Block	No Change			One-way	One-way
Cross Traffic Routes					
Doyle - Murphy					
Curtis		Temporary	Permanent Closure		
Chestnut*			Temporary	Permanent Closure	
Crane					
Note: An option is to continue to allow cross-traffic at Chestnut					

Alterative 2 – Two-way Vehicle Traffic

Build a three-block pedestrian-friendly main street on Santa Cruz Avenue that runs between Doyle Street and Crane Street. This would entail:

- *Eliminating the parking on both sides of Santa Cruz Avenue*
- Cross-traffic would be allowed only at Crane Street intersection and between Doyle and Murphy Streets.
- The sidewalks on both sides would be extended as far as possible yet allow a single center lane on both sides.
- The three short sections of side streets running from Santa Cruz Avenue to the parking plazas on Curtis and Chestnut would extend the central sidewalks.

Menlo Park should undertake a multi-stage implementation of the pedestrian-friendly street starting with a full-scale design; establish evaluation criteria, solicit resident and business feedback on a regular basis; and implement high value changes and improvements. As individual blocks are added, help businesses on Santa Cruz create inviting back entrances from parking plazas.

